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Slip Covers for furniture



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SLIP COVERS FOR FURNITURE

by

BESS VIEMONT MORRISON, *Assistant home economics specialist*

SLIP COVERS now occupy a permanent place in home furnishing. They have advanced from the old-fashioned, loose, baglike protectors against dust in the summertime to trimly fitted, smartly tailored coverings suitable for year-round use.

Materials, too, keep pace with the streamlined design of the covers. Controlled shrinkage, colors more permanent to light and washing, finishes that render the fabric crease resisting and water repellent, are outstanding improvements in cotton fabrics particularly. Added to these various service qualities, there is an ever increasing variety of artistic designs and texture—all of which makes it possible to find ideal slip-cover materials at moderate prices.

Uses of Slip Covers

Slip covers may be an economy in several directions. They protect permanent furniture coverings from wear and dust and thus postpone re-upholstering. Slip covers are often used to harmonize the decorative scheme of a room or to add a new accent to long-used furnishings. They may even substitute for upholstery. In the summertime fresh, light-colored slip covers that cover up the dark, warm-looking upholstery change a room into a cool, restful, and inviting place to spend hot days. For any of these purposes they afford an alternative at considerable savings.

Simple, washable covers protect good upholstery and permit the entire family to enjoy the easy chairs. They lessen the wear and tear from everyday work clothes and from the sticky fingers and playthings of the little folks. Besides, they save the exposed wood portions from many raps and scratches. In fact, where furniture gets hard use, removable covers that can be quickly taken off and tubbed are almost indispensable. They are far more practical and harmonious, decoratively speaking, than the tidies of Victorian vintage which until a few years ago so universally protected the arms and backs of chairs from soil. No matter how closely woven the cloth may be, some dust will sift through the fabric so that it is necessary to remove the slip cover occasionally and brush the upholstery.

In place of upholstery

the question.

By providing a relatively inexpensive new cover for worn, faded, and soiled upholstery, slip covers help to tide over a lean period in the family income when the purchase of new upholstery or new furniture would be entirely out of

More and more furniture is now sold "in the muslin." Rather than upholster such furniture at once, slip covers are used. This reduces the initial expenditure and often enables a family to buy furniture of better quality than would be possible if upholstery had to be included. Permanent coverings may be put on at some later time, if desired.

Decorative asset

Furniture covers provide a relatively inexpensive means of changing the decorative plan of the room. They make it possible to have different color schemes for the different seasons in the year. More important still, slip covers hide unattractive and inharmonious colors in upholstery and often conceal poor structural lines as well as out-of-date decorations on the chair itself. Thus they may transform an unsightly piece into a decorative asset and harmonize the misfits with other furnishings.

Choosing Fabrics for Service

Slip-cover materials now come in such a wide range of colors, textures, designs, and weaves that it is possible to find a fabric that will meet the decorative requirements yet be sturdy enough to withstand hard wear and repeated laundering. After all, slip covers represent a considerable investment in time, money, and effort too if they are made at home. So it is economy to look for a fabric that holds its own through several seasons' use.

The ideal fabric

An ideal slip-cover material has sufficient weight and enough strong yarns to withstand hard wear; launders easily without shrinking so much that the cover cannot be used again; and holds its color in light and washing (fig. 1).

Firm, closely woven fabrics keep their shape, tailor well, are easy to work on, and stop most of the dust from sifting through onto the furniture underneath. On the other hand, loosely woven, sleazy materials stretch, fray badly along cut edges, and are difficult to tailor. Slip covers made from such fabrics soon pull out at the seams, and the materials afford little protection against dust.

It is usually more economical to buy the very best material that can be afforded. This does not necessarily mean the most expensive. Sometimes factors that add greatly to the cost of the fabric have little or no bearing on the serviceability of the cloth. For example, the design may have been created by a highly paid artist and applied to the material by hand. While this may produce a very beautiful fabric, it adds substantially to the cost but does not increase the wearing quality.

On the other hand, very inexpensive materials that fade quickly both in light and in laundering, are not economical. As a rule they are filled with

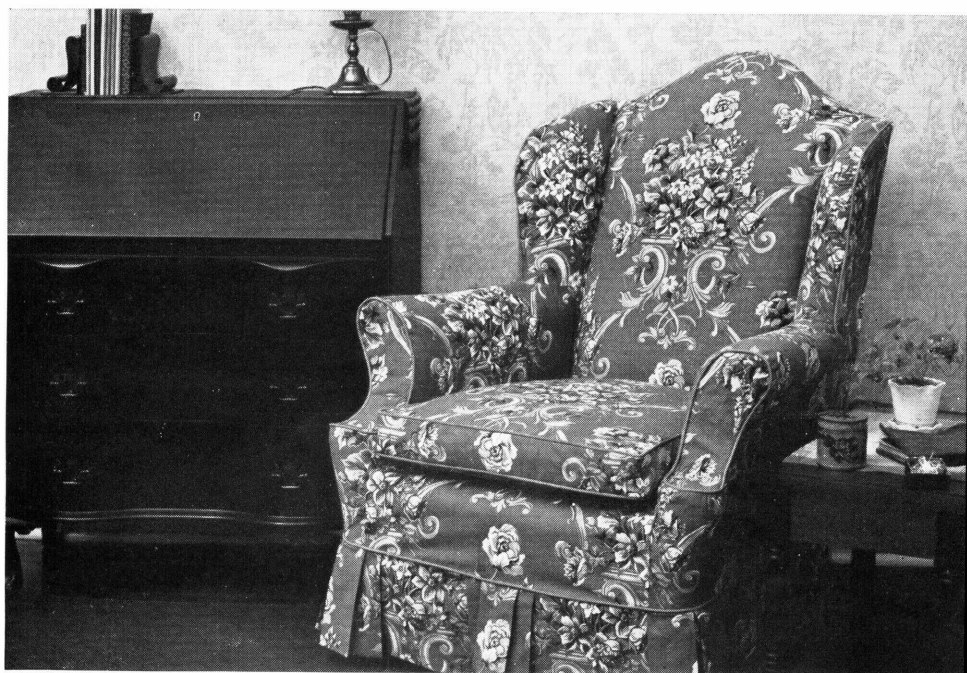


Figure 1.—The ideal slip-cover fabric is serviceable, decorative, and easy to tailor.

dressing and finishing materials that wash out and leave a coarse, flimsy, loosely woven cloth. They are not worthy of the labor spent in making the covers. In between these two extremes are many moderate-priced, durable slip-cover fabrics.

In recent years cottons have largely replaced linens, which were once the accepted slip-cover materials. Cottons are usually more closely woven, come in a wider range of patterns and weaves, wrinkle less, and so always look neater. For the most part, the dyes are more fast to light than they used to be so that they fade less now than a few years ago. Then too, many of the fabrics have been preshrunk. Besides, cottons are easy to launder and generally are lower in price.

A few of the most serviceable cotton slip-cover materials are cretonne, crash, plain or striped denim, galatea, rep, lightweight tapestries, French ticking, drapery sateen, and damask. Some lighter fabrics such as chintz, gingham, percale, and toile de Jouy, may be used, but they are generally only 36 inches wide and sometimes do not cut to as good advantage as the wider materials. They also lack sufficient body to resist wrinkling. In addition to the fabrics named, many novelties appear every year in a wide range of textures and patterns.

Many cottons on the market now have special finishes such as crease-resistant and water-repellent treatments that improve the natural qualities of the fiber. One example of a specially finished fabric that is a great im-

provement over the old type is the so-called permanently glazed chintz. This finish is chemical and is guaranteed to withstand washing and dry cleaning. The cloth is also supposed to be preshrunk and the dyes fast.

Besides cottons and linens, a few rayon taffetas, moires, and similar materials are occasionally used for slip covers in the bedroom, but for the most part they are too formal for the average home.

Shrinkage control There is a growing tendency among manufacturers to stamp information concerning shrinkage on the selvedge of slip-cover materials. When a consumer sees "Colorfast and preshrunk—residual shrinkage of this fabric does not exceed 1%—Test CCCT 191 A" printed on the selvedge, she can be fairly sure the material will not shrink so much in the first washing that the cover can no longer be used. Many of these guaranteed fabrics may be had for the same price as or even less than similar ones without the guaranty. Several of the labeled fabrics are available at prices ranging from 20 to 65 cents a yard, and they may be bought from mail-order houses as well as from retail stores.

Just how much a slip-cover fabric will shrink is always a guess unless there is some guide to indicate how much to expect. Since the Trade Practice Rules on Shrinkage of Woven Cotton Goods were issued by the Federal Trade Commission in June 1938, every piece of cotton cloth designated as preshrunk must also state the amount of shrinkage remaining in the cloth. (The use of the word "preshrunk" alone means the fabric will



Figure 2.—Look for a label giving the percentage of shrinkage.

not shrink at all.) Although such labeling is not mandatory but merely optional with the manufacturer, a sufficient number of materials are labeled to give the purchaser a wide range of colors and designs as well as prices from which to choose.

This definite labeling of the percentage of shrinkage left in cotton goods is a great advance over the former use of patented trade names and vague terms. Also there is no question of the need for shrinkage control in slip-cover fabrics.

In a study of typical slip-cover materials the Bureau of Home Economics found that warp shrinkage of unlabeled materials sometimes ran as high as 11 percent, or about 4 inches to the yard. The fillingwise shrinkage in some cases was as high as 6 percent, or a little over 2 inches per yard. In the heavier, novelty-type fabrics better suited for upholstery substitutes than for slip covers in the usual sense, the amount of shrinkage was even greater. The warp shrinkage in one of these fabrics was 17 percent, or about 6 inches in every yard; the greatest fillingwise shrinkage was a little over 7 percent. Such marked shrinkage as this means that slip covers made from these fabrics would be entirely too small after one washing. Since it is practically impossible to make allowances for shrinkage when making slip covers, the cost of the fabric and the making are almost a total loss. With labeled materials in which the remaining shrinkage was under 2 percent, equivalent to about three-fourths of an inch a yard, the slip cover could still be used after laundering.

The study revealed also that the amount of shrinkage in several unlabeled fabrics was quite low. This indicates that many fabrics have been subjected to a preshrinking process, even though not so labeled. However, in buying unlabeled materials there is always an uncertainty as to how much they will shrink. If the purchase of an unlabeled fabric represents a considerable outlay of money it is an economy to get about two-thirds of a yard and test it for shrinkage before buying the fabric. (To test for shrinkage, mark off a square 18 inches each way and sew a colored thread on the marks. Wash the sample in exactly the same way that the slip covers will be washed, dry, sprinkle slightly, then smooth out gently so as not to stretch the cloth and press by putting the iron down in one place, lifting it, and putting it down in another section. Measure the square from side to side in several places and calculate the shrinkage.)

**Dyes fast to
light and
washing**

Statements regarding the fastness of the color often appear along with those relative to shrinkage. It is very common to see the selvage marked "guaranteed sunfast and wash-fast." Sometimes a label states that vat or indanthrene dyes (a special class of vat dyes) have been used. This is an indirect way of saying the color is fast since with these dyes the color is developed right on the fiber and becomes a part of it. One fabric marked "vat-dyes—100% guaranteed sunfast and washable" was found when materials were being selected for the study referred to above.

In testing the colorfastness of slip-cover fabrics, the Bureau of Home Economics found that only a few of the materials in this study showed a perceptible change in color when exposed for a relatively short time to strong light comparable to sunshine. Upon extended exposure more fabrics faded. However, about one-fourth of the fabrics held their original color to the end of the test.

On the whole, the dyes of the "guaranteed" fabrics had a more satisfactory fastness to laundering than to light. When washed by the most severe method, only 1 fabric carrying a "tubfast" guaranty faded; whereas 5 of the 13 unlabeled pieces faded badly.

Decorative Features

Whether to select a plain or a patterned material is always an individual problem. The answer depends upon how much design there is in the room. Likewise the other furnishings and the exposure and the size of the room govern the colors to choose.

Plain or patterned fabrics

Generally speaking, a plain material can be used on any piece of furniture in any room. It is especially good on large pieces and in rooms where there is already sufficient pattern on the walls, in the draperies, and in the rug. In many respects a plain or indistinctly figured fabric is the easiest to start with. While it is true that the seam lines and fittings show up more clearly in plain materials, one does not have to worry about spacing the designs, matching the pattern, the up-and-down of the figure, or whether the design is printed with the thread of the material. However, too much plain color leads to monotony. Then, too, plain materials show wrinkles more readily than figured fabrics.

With plain walls and floor coverings, pattern in the slip covers adds interest and variety. The designs should be in scale with the furniture as well as the size of the room. Large designs are suitable for large pieces of furniture but overpower small pieces. Be careful in using fabrics with large pattern. Too much design is confusing and tends to make the room look too full. At the same time small designs on medium-sized or large pieces of furniture look weak and trivial. Stripes, like bold designs, should be used sparingly. In small amounts they give zest; in large amounts they are distracting.

Since patterned fabrics when fitted on a chair often look very different from what they did on the counter, it is advisable whenever possible to obtain 1- or 2-yard samples and try them on the furniture in the room where they will be used. Failing this, ask the salesperson to open up a sufficient length of the material so that you may see how the pattern will look in a large area.

The colors in the slip covers should repeat one or more of those in the other furnishings. For example, a plain colored slip may pick up one of the less prominent colors in the rug and the seam cording another. Or the

design in the slip cover may combine the plain colors used elsewhere in the room. In either case, key the slip cover to the other furnishings.

Consider also the texture of the fabric as well as its color and design. Coarse textures are suitable for sturdy pieces of furniture, whereas the lustrous surface of a satin or damask suggests formality. In between are many textures that are neither too coarse nor too lustrous for informal use in the average living room, bedroom, library, or sunporch.

Trimming The choice of trimmings goes a long way toward the success or failure of slip covers. Professionally made covers almost always have corded or welted seams, which accent the construction lines. With figured materials the cording usually matches the background or one color in the design; with plain fabrics it may be made from the same material as the slip cover or may contrast in both material and color. Sometimes moss fringe (p. 13), chenille, cable cord, and novelty braids are used in place of the welting. All these trimmings can be purchased by the yard, but be sure to get one that has a tape attached to sew into the seams.

To save an extra trip to the store buy the trimming at the same time that you buy the slip-cover material. Also it is easier to tell how various trimmings will look with the fabric when you have a large piece than when you have only a small sample.

Estimating Yardage

The first step in making a successful slip cover is to measure the piece of furniture to be covered. All measurements must be accurate and should be written down as they are taken. Both length and width measurements for each section, between points the greatest distance apart, are needed. The length measurements tell how much material it takes for each part of the slip cover, and the width measurements determine whether a wide or a narrow fabric cuts to better advantage. Totaling the yardage required for the different parts, plus allowances for seams, matching patterns, and trimming, gives the amount of material needed for the entire slip cover.

Dining and occasional chairs For a simple boxed cover on the seat of an upholstered or padded dining-room chair only three measurements are necessary: The width of the seat across the front, the distance from the front to the back, and the depth of the seat. When taking measurements make generous allowances for seams. Either start 1 inch from the end of the tape measure and add 1 inch at the other end, or add 2 inches to the exact measurement. It is better to cut off a little extra than to have narrow, skimpy seams that will pull out.

For occasional chairs, that is, the type with upholstered back as well as seat and exposed wooden legs and arms, height and width measurements for inside and outside back are needed in addition to seat measurements.

Upholstered chairs

Many more measurements are required for upholstered chairs, than are necessary for straight or occasional chairs. When measuring a wing chair, for example, the usual procedure is to start with the lower edge of the outside back, *a* (fig. 3), and measure to the top, *b*, then over the top and down the inside back to *c*, the front of the apron, *d*, and down to the lower edge of the apron, *e*. Record the length of each part separately; then go back and measure the widest part of each section. Be sure to make a generous enough allowance on the width of the inside back and inside arms where they join

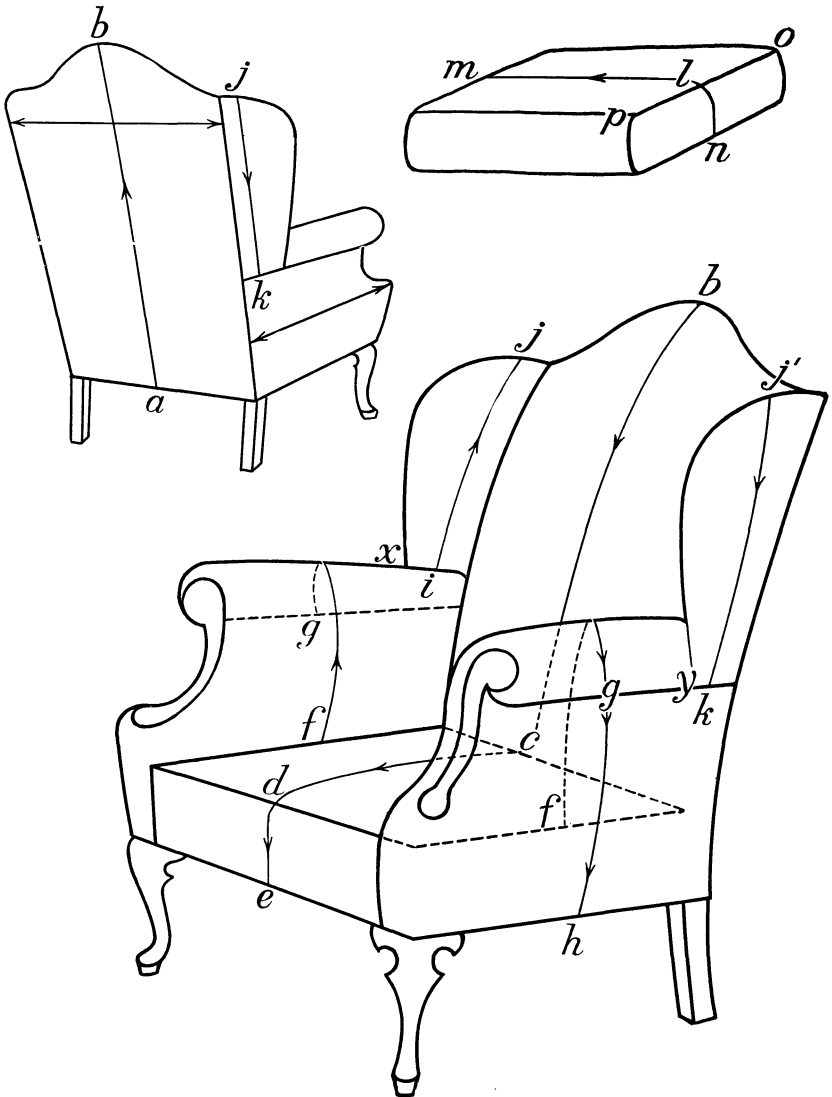


Figure 3.—Where to take the measurements needed for making a slip cover.

and on the length of the inside back and the seat where these pieces are sewed together (at *c*) to permit a tuck-in at these seams. Otherwise, with use, the slip cover will work out of place and seem to fit badly.

Next measure the inside of the arm from the seat line, *f*, over the arm to the seam in the upholstery at *g*, then down the lower edge of the chair at *h*. For the wings measure from *i*, the seam where the inside armpiece joins the wing, to the highest part of the wing, at *j*, then on to *k*, or the seam which joins the outside armpiece to the wingpiece. When the wing and arm sections are cut together, measure from the highest part of the wing, *j*, to the seat for the inside length and from *j* to the lower edge of the chair for the length of the outside piece. Now take the width measurements of these pieces.

For a separate cushion, measure from the front of the cushion *l*, to the back, *m*; from side to side at the widest place, *p* to *o*; and the depth of the boxing, *l* to *n*. Remember that two pieces, one for the top and one for the bottom, as well as four pieces of boxing, are required to cover the cushion.

The following shows the length and width measurements for the wing chair on page 3.

Measurements:	Length (inches)	Width (inches)
Outside back (<i>a</i> to <i>b</i>).....	36	24
Inside back (<i>b</i> to <i>c</i>).....	36	24
Seat (<i>c</i> to <i>e</i>).....	27	22½
Arms (2):		
Inside (<i>f</i> to <i>g</i>).....	19½	25
Outside (<i>g</i> to <i>h</i>).....	13½	32½
Wings (2):		
Inside (<i>i</i> to <i>j</i>).....	17	16
Outside (<i>j</i> to <i>k</i>).....	18	12
Cushion:		
Front to back (<i>l</i> to <i>m</i>).....	20	21
Boxings (<i>l</i> to <i>n</i>).....	3	21

If the slip cover is to be finished with a valance or ruffle, measure also the distance around the lower edge of the chair and the distance of the chair from the floor at the front, back, and sides. These measurements are:

	Inches
Distance around lower edge.....	112
Distance from floor:	
Center front.....	9
Sides, midway front to back.....	8½
Center back.....	8

Except for the wings, chairs of the barrel-back, club, and lounge types and love seats, sofas, and davenports are measured in exactly the same way as the wing chair. Whatever the type of chair, it is usually advisable to make the seam lines in the slip cover follow those in the upholstery and to make the measurements with this in mind.

Measurements for the seam trimming should also be taken at the same time as those for the fabric. As a rule the cording or trimming follows the principal construction lines in the slip cover (fig. 1).

Using the measurements of the wing chair as an example, the amount of goods required for each part and the total yardage are as follows:

	<i>Amount of material needed, including seam allowance</i>	
	<i>36-inch cloth</i>	<i>48-inch cloth</i>
Outside back	38	38
Inside back	38	38
Seat	29	29
Arms	74	52½
Wings	39	19
Cushion	64	22
Total (in inches)	282	198½

Reduced to yardage, only 5½ yards of the 48-inch goods is needed as against almost 8 yards of the 36-inch width.

The wider cloth cuts to better advantage because several of the width measurements on the chair are 24 inches or less (p. 9). For example, since the widest part of the cushion, including seam allowances, is only 23 inches both the top and bottom can be cut from one length. Likewise the boxings can all be cut from the strip left after cutting the seat. Similar savings can be effected by cutting the outside wing and the inside armpieces from the same length.

While such economies are workable in plain material, it is not always possible in figured material to fit the smaller pieces around the larger ones. When the designs are large, there is often considerable waste. Figured materials, however, can sometimes be pieced in inconspicuous places, as the seat under the cushions and the valance under the pleats. It is advisable, though, not to estimate

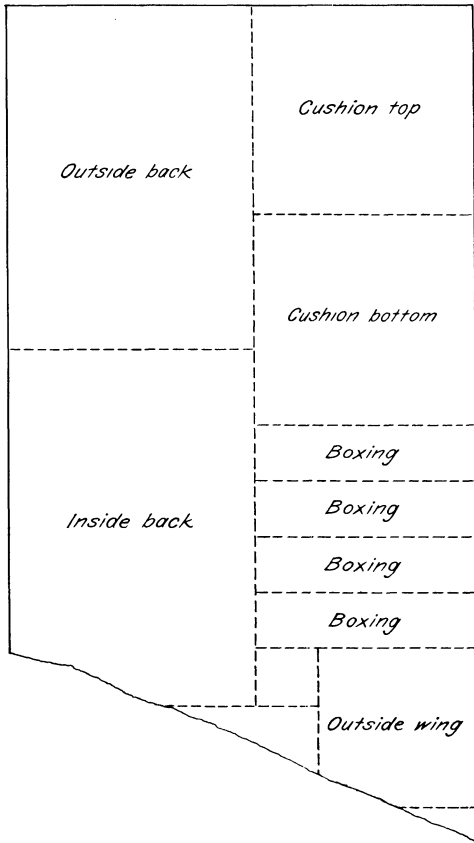


Figure 4.—How to estimate amount of material needed for slip cover on page 3.

the yardage too closely. In patterned fabrics particularly, it is better to allow an extra half or three-quarters of a yard for matching the patterns.

When figuring how much material to buy, it is a good plan to draw a sketch of the material to scale and mark in the different parts, as in figure 4. This serves not only as an aid in calculating the material but as a guide when blocking out the pieces preparatory to modeling the slip cover on the chair. Although all 48-inch fabrics do not always cut as advantageously as that in figure 4, usually at least a fourth and sometimes a third less of the wider cloth is required than is needed of the 36-inch material.

Valance or ruffle A valance around the lower edge of the slip cover requires additional material. In order to calculate how much more cloth will be needed, decide whether the valance is to be pleated or gathered. If it is to be pleated, work out the pleating arrangement before going any further. The necessary fullness to allow for a pleated valance depends upon the depth of the pleats and the width of the spaces between the pleats or groups of pleats. It may vary from two to three times the length of the finished space (p. 19).

For a gathered ruffle, which is much simpler to make, allow twice the length of the space. That is, for a chair measuring 112 inches around the lower edge, provide a piece 224 inches, or 6¼ yards, long to give sufficient fullness.

To find the yardage required for either a gathered ruffle or pleated valance for the wing chair on page 3, multiply the distance around the lower edge of the chair by 2 or 3, as the case may be, to get the length required for the valance. Then divide this length by the width of the slip-cover material to get the number of widths needed. Multiply the number of widths by the depth of the valance plus seam and hem allowances, to obtain the total yardage required. The following illustrates the measurements for a gathered valance, or the pleated one used on the lower edge of the slip cover shown on page 3, and for the box-pleated valance shown in *D*, pages 18 and 19.

	<i>For gathered ruffle or the pleated valance shown on the wing chair on page 3</i>	<i>For a box- pleated valance</i>
Distance around chair.....	112 inches.....	112 inches.
Allowance for fullness.....	2 times.....	3 times.
Total length of valance piece.....	224 inches.....	336 inches.
Width of material.....	48 inches.....	48 inches.
Number of widths.....	4¾.....	7
Depth of valance (plus seam and hem allowance).....	10 inches.....	10 inches.
Yardage required.....	50 inches ¹	70 inches.

¹ Necessary to buy full width as a fraction of a width cannot be purchased.

The amount of material needed for the valance must be added to that required to make the body of the slip cover. Therefore, it was necessary to

buy a total of 7 yards ($198\frac{1}{2}$ inches + 50 inches = 6 yards and $32\frac{1}{2}$ inches) for the slip cover on the wing chair (fig. 1). If a box-pleated valance like *D* on page 18 is desired, $7\frac{1}{2}$ yards of material will be needed.

Construction

Slip covers may be modeled right on the chair or cut from a pattern (p. 20). There are advantages in both methods. Modeling the cover on the chair saves time and is preferable when there is no difficult fitting to do. However, it may take a little more material than is required when a pattern is used.

Modeling a slip cover

For a simple slip cover such as that shown in figure 5, it is possible to block out pieces the approximate size and shape right on the slip-cover fabric, using the seat measurements as a guide.

After the pieces are all cut out, pin the parts together on the chair, and make sure that the warp yarns run front to back on the seat and from top to bottom in the boxings (fig. 6). Leave plenty of material at the side back for the plackets. Mark the seam lines and around the back posts. Trim away the excess material in the curve and clip at intervals to within $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch of the seam line. When the cover is all pinned together, mark the lower edge with tailor's chalk or a pencil. Baste and stitch the seams on the stitching line, trim to $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch, overcast, and press open. Finish the placket with hems and snaps or with ready-made snap tape. Slide fasteners in suitable lengths for plackets of this kind are difficult to obtain. When the cover is finished, give it a final pressing, and it is ready for use.

Advantages of a pattern

In making seat covers for dining-room chairs, the one advantage of a pattern is to eliminate repeated fitting. A pattern carefully made and clearly marked takes care of the fitting once and for all for the whole set of chairs.

In making slip covers for more complicated types of chairs, a pattern enables one to work out all the details before starting on the good material. It also lends confidence to the inexperienced slip-cover maker because it gives her a chance to practice and make necessary alterations without fear of spoiling the real fabric. Occasionally such a pattern can be saved and used whenever a new slip cover is needed for that particular chair. Furthermore, it helps in placing designs symmetrically and in cutting without waste. On the other hand, a person may become discouraged while making the pattern and never attempt the slip cover because she realizes how much hard work is involved.

In modeling a slip-cover pattern some persons advocate making only one-half of the pattern. Though this may save time and material, more is gained by making the entire pattern. In the first place, prolonged use of the chair may have caused enough unevenness in the padding to make considera-

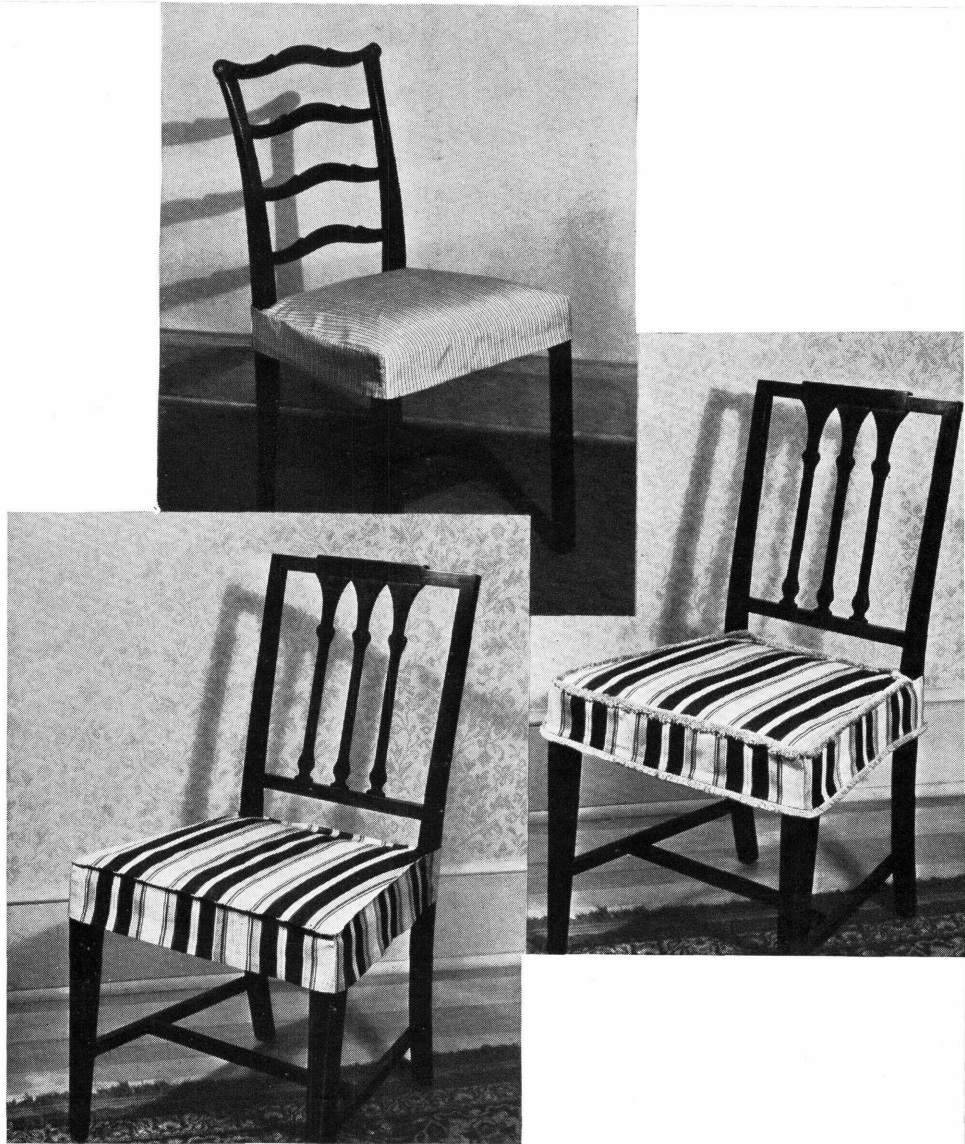


Figure 5.—Seat covers for dining-room chairs. (Top) Finished with plain seams and a hem. **(Right)** The principal seams and lower edge are accented with moss fringe which matches one of the colors in the stripe. **(Bottom)** Finished with French seams and a hem.

ble difference in fitting the two sides, yet not be noticeable to the eye. More important still is being able to pin fit the whole cover, make any necessary alterations in the pattern, and thus eliminate some handling of the better fabric. Having the complete pattern also makes it easier to cut the pieces from a figured material and to be sure that the designs are placed symmetrically on corresponding parts of the chair.

Paper patterns can be bought for some types and pieces of furniture, but they must be fitted to the individual piece. So it is almost as easy to make a pattern from the beginning.

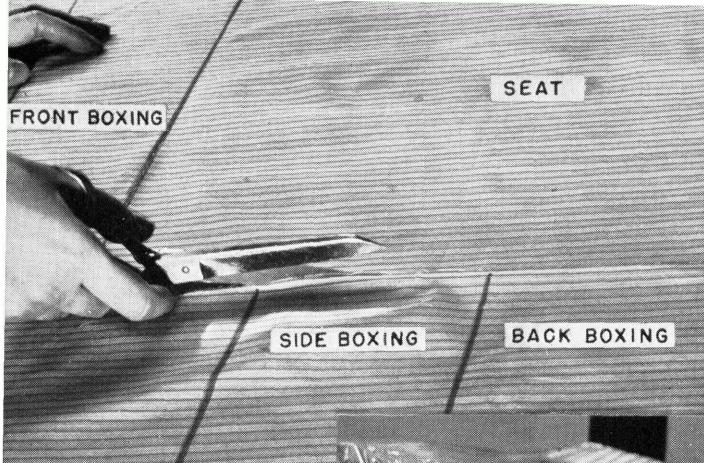
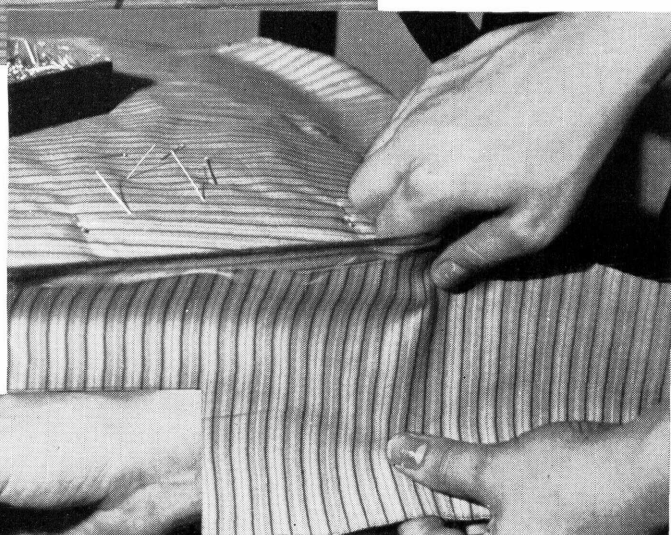
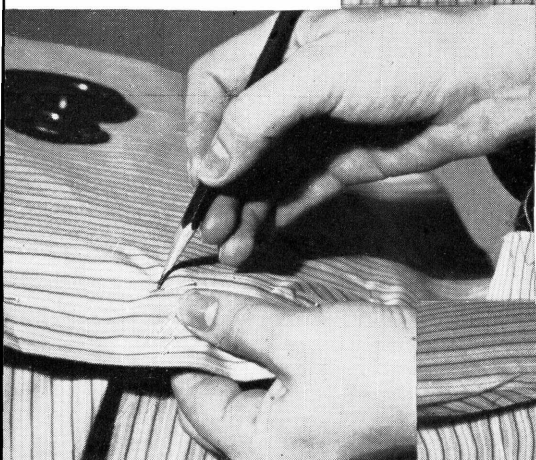


Figure 6.—Steps in making a seat cover for a dining-room chair.

↑
Blocking out
pieces.

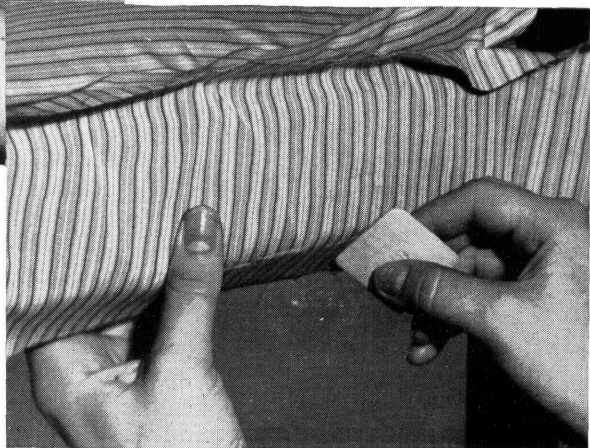


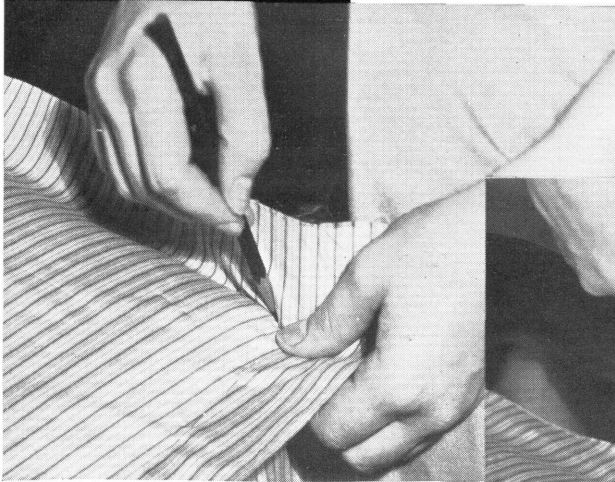
↑
Pinning parts together on chair.



↑
Marking seam lines

→
and lower edge.

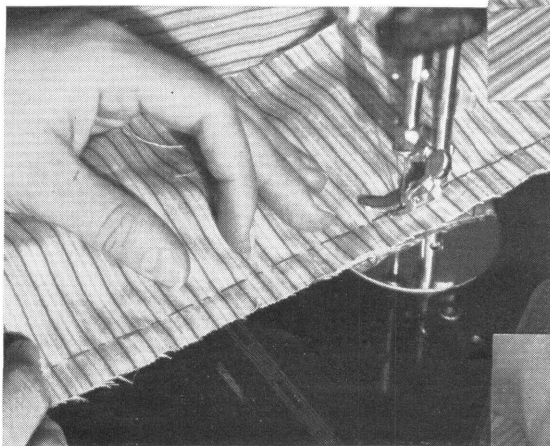




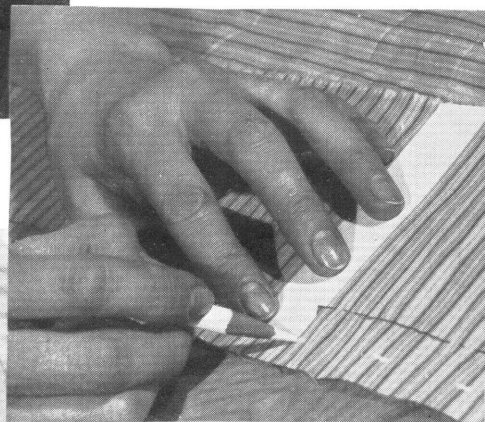
Marking around back post.



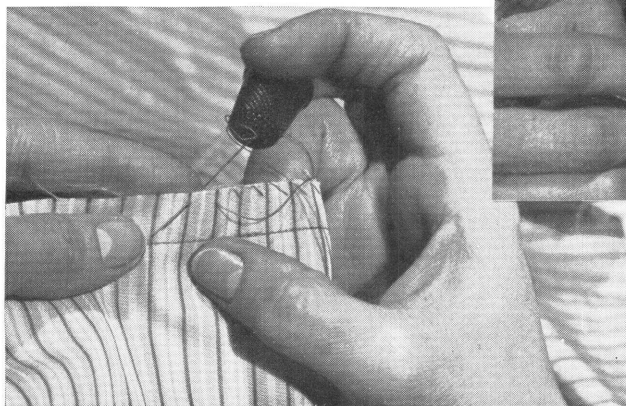
**Clipping around curve
at back post.**



Stitching seams.



**Marking seams to
an even width.**



**Overcasting
raw edges.**

The most satisfactory pattern is modeled right on the piece of furniture to be covered, and the steps are precisely the same as though the slip-cover material were being used. Any firm, inexpensive material similar to the slip-cover fabric in weight and the way it handles may be used for the pattern. Unbleached muslin, good portions of old sheets, or large sugar sacks are satisfactory; but do not use anything so old and worn that it stretches or tears easily. A stretchy material results in an inaccurate pattern and a poorly fitted slip cover.

Pattern for wing chair In contrast to the very simple slip covers for dining-room chairs which in reality are little more than boxed cushions, is the cover for the upholstered chair on page 3. This involves all the problems found in making slip covers. However, a person with some knowledge of sewing need have no hesitancy in attempting the more difficult types. With patience and careful workmanship she can turn out attractive, well-fitted slip covers.

Since a wing chair is one of the most difficult pieces to cover, it was selected as a model to illustrate the various steps in making the slip-cover pattern. In modeling a pattern for this chair, start with the outer back. Cut a piece of material the necessary width and length, including seam allowances, and pin it to the upholstering at the center top. Make sure the crosswise yarns run parallel to the floor and the warp yarns at right angles to the floor; otherwise the cover will be crooked and will fit badly after laundering. Pin at the upper corners and in enough other places to hold the piece securely. Cut the inside back, lay it over the chair and smooth into position, allowing 1 inch at the top for seams. Pin the two pieces together across the top, easing in any fullness. If there is much fullness to ease in, use darts to remove the excess material. Next, model the pattern for the outside and inside wings, the arms and seat. Make sure that the yarns run straight in all pieces (fig. 7).

To save time, the pattern for only one wing and one arm need be made on the chair. After these are fitted and the seams marked, they may be removed and the pieces for the other side cut from them. Mark the seams and reassemble the pattern on the chair; then proceed with the rest of the pattern.

After the cover is all pinned together, go back over the seam lines and make any adjustments necessary to insure straight seams and a good fit. Mark all stitching lines and the lower edge (fig. 6) with a soft pencil or tailor's chalk. Put in any other markings that will help assemble the parts; then trim the seams to three-fourths of an inch.

When the slip-cover material is figured, it is advisable to indicate on the pattern for the inside back the position of the principal motif. The center of this design should come about 2 inches above the midpoint between the top of the chair and the top of the seat cushion. When there is no cushion, it should come about 2 inches above the midpoint between the top and the seat of the chair.

The valance pattern

If a valance is to be used around the lower edge, cut a width of muslin 1 inch shorter than the distance from the lower edge of the chair to the floor. Experiment with different pleating arrangements until you get a pleasing effect. While trying out various spacings of pleats, keep in mind that an uneven number of pleats is generally more attractive than an even number and that a difference between the width of the pleats and the intervening spaces is more interesting than when the two are the same. Also, pleats usually set better if two meet at the corners of the chair rather than if one must extend around the corner.

The size and the lines in the piece of furniture being covered govern, to a large extent, the number and width of pleats or groups of pleats to put in

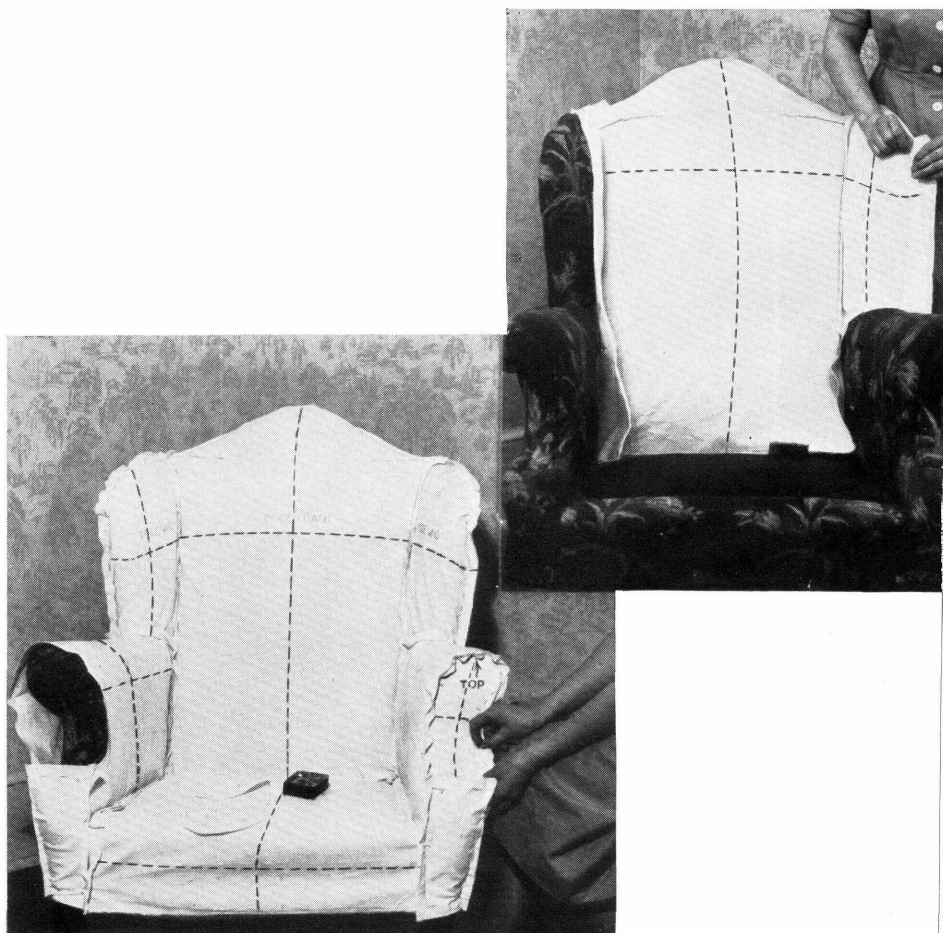


Figure 7.—Making a slip-cover pattern. (Above) Darts remove fullness at top of the back. Fitting the pattern for the wings. (Below) Dotted lines indicate the direction of warp and filling yarns.

the valance. There must be enough fullness to give sufficient weight to the lower part of the chair, yet not so much that the pleats appear crowded. As a rule, from 7 to 11 pleats on a side or across the front are adequate for the average-sized chair.

Several sketches of attractive pleat arrangements planned for the wing chair are shown in figure 8. The detailed diagrams in figure 9 show the amount of material needed for one-half of each plan and how to space the

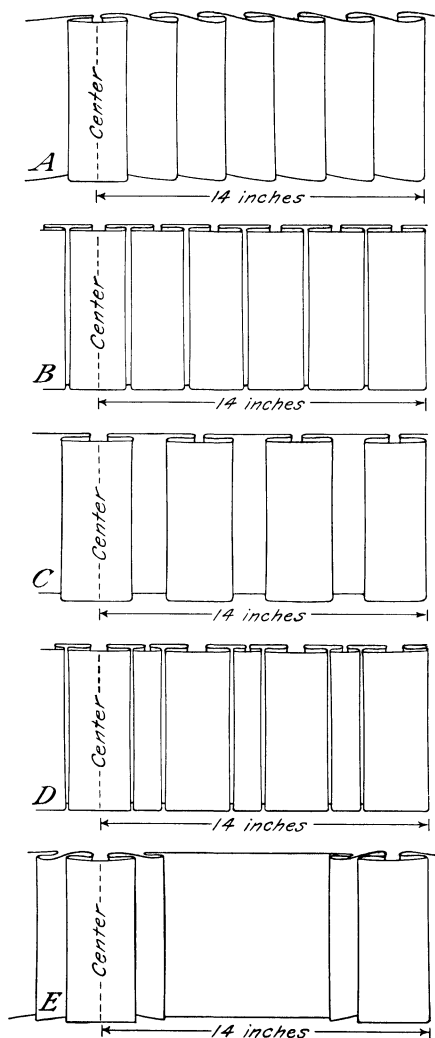


Figure 8.—Some pleating arrangements appropriate for valances: A, Knife or side pleats; B, box pleats with edges of adjacent pleats touching; C, box pleats separated by a space; D, combining wide and narrow pleats; E, box and knife pleats combined with spaces.

pins for laying in the pleats. Each arrangement in figure 8 measures 14 inches, one-half the width of the chair across the front at the lower edge. The knife pleats, *A*, are the simplest and easiest to make. In *B* and *C* all the box pleats in each arrangement are the same width. In *B* the edges of adjacent pleats touch, whereas in *C* they are separated. Arrangement *D* combines two widths of pleats. The edges of the adjoining pleats touch but, if desired, they may be separated by a space. In *E*, the center box pleat has a knife pleat on either side; but the box pleat at the ends of the grouping has only one knife pleat turned toward the center. With this plan, two box pleats will meet at the corner of the chair; however, a knife pleat may be put on both sides of all box pleats, if desired. If this is done, it may be necessary to shorten the space between the groups of pleats, but be careful not to make the space between the pleats and the groups of pleats the same width.

To adapt any of these arrangements to a wider or narrower measurement, a slight adjustment can be made in the width of pleats or the spacing. For example, in *A* the width of the knife pleats (*b* to *a*, fig. 9) may be slightly

increased or decreased. In arrangements B, C, and D, changes can be made in the width of the box pleats (*a* to *a*). In E, the distance from *d* to *d* may be lengthened or shortened.

To determine how much alteration to make, divide the difference between the width of your chair and 28 (the width of the wing chair for which the diagrams in figure 8 were drawn) by the number of pleats or spaces in the plan selected. Thus, if your chair measures 30 inches and you have chosen plan D, divide 2 inches (30 minus 28) by 9, the number of wide pleats in D. It is necessary then to increase the distance between *a* and *a* from $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches to $3\frac{1}{8}$ inches. In E, it is necessary only to widen the spaces *d* to *d* by 1 inch.

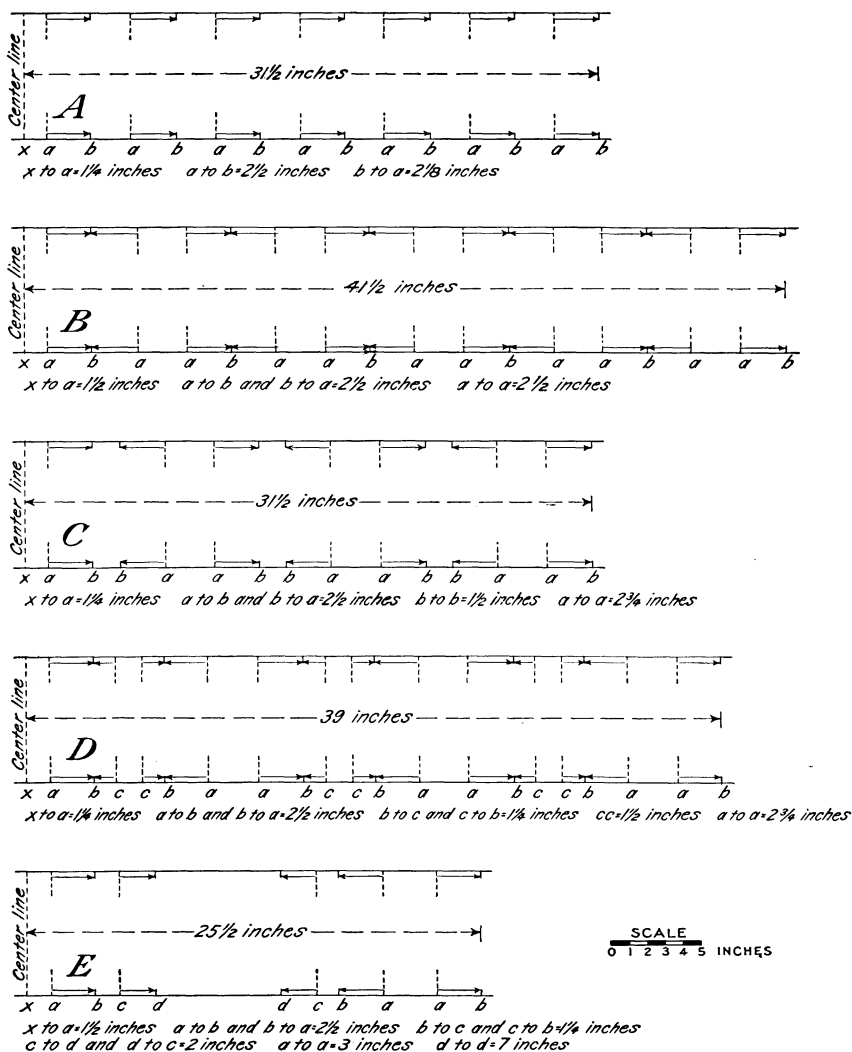


Figure 9.—Amount of material needed and position of pins for pleating arrangements in figure 8.

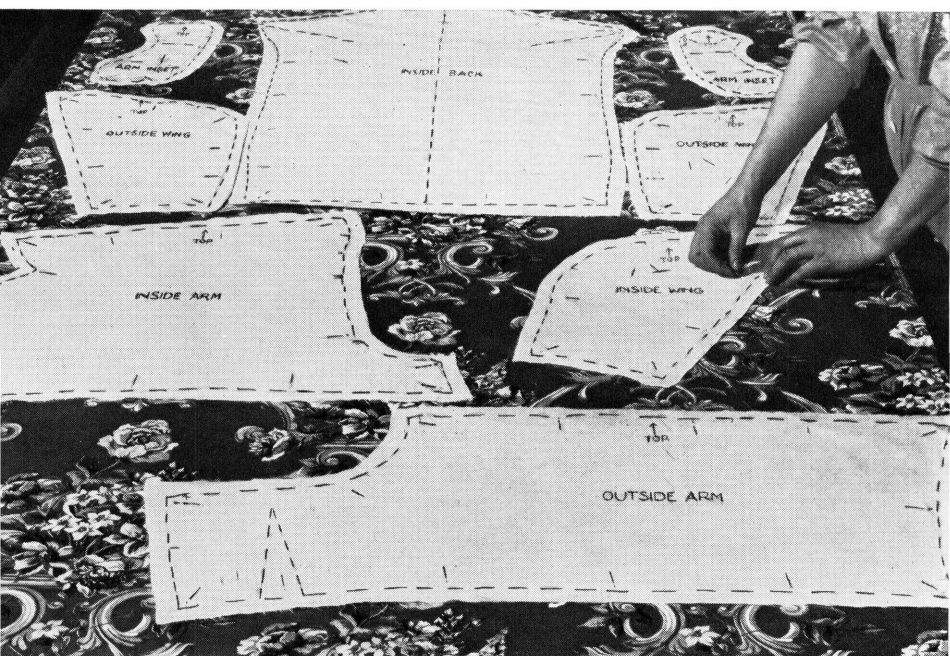


Figure 10.—By placing the pattern right side up on the slip-cover material, each piece is cut for the side of the chair on which the pattern was modeled. This insures a better fit than if the pattern is reversed.

Usually the distance on the sides of a chair, from front to back is less than the distance across the front. In that event the necessary alterations are made exactly the same as those described in the preceding paragraph except that the difference is subtracted from, rather than added to, 28 inches (the width of the wing chair) across the front.

Cutting the slip cover When the pattern is all finished, remove it carefully from the chair. Take the pieces apart and place the pattern right side up on the right side of the slip-cover fabric (fig. 10). See that the designs are in the desired position and that the warp and filling yarns in the cloth are parallel with those in the pattern. Pin the pieces securely in place; then cut around them. Transfer all seam and construction markings to the slip-cover material with either a tracing wheel or on a tracing board. To reproduce all markings clearly and accurately on the wrong side of the slip-cover fabric, lay the pattern, which is still pinned to the material, on the tracing board and mark all seams and notches with a pencil (fig. 11). Remove the pattern, pin, and baste the slip cover together ready for seaming.

The type of seam you decide to use determines how to baste the cover together. As a rule plain seams are used for the inconspicuous joinings, but sometimes they appear too insignificant for the principal structural lines. A decorative seam is preferable for these places unless the lines of the chair are not pleasing and it is better not to emphasize them. Besides

plain seams, corded, piped, bound, and French seams all have a place in slip-cover construction.

Plain and bound seams

To make a plain seam, place the right sides of two parts of the slip cover together, then baste and stitch along the markings indicating the seam line. Trim the seam to one-half inch, overcast each edge, and press open. In firm materials that do not fray, the seams may be trimmed with pinking shears. Overcasting is then unnecessary.

For the bound seam, make a plain seam on the right side. Trim this seam to three-sixteenths or one-fourth of an inch and bind with a bias tape or a narrow bias strip cut from the slip-cover material. The two rows of stitching necessary in seams of this kind add strength to the seam but detract from the appearance of the finished cover if they show on the right side. It is possible, however, to conceal all stitching. First, stitch the seam, then place one edge of the binding even with the cut edges of the seam, with the right sides of the binding and slip cover together. Stitch just back of the first seam line. Fold the binding over the raw edges, turn under and hem down by hand to cover the machine stitching.

The corded or welted seam is the most commonly used decorative seam. It takes away the home-made look and gives the slip cover a professional touch that cannot be attained in any other way.

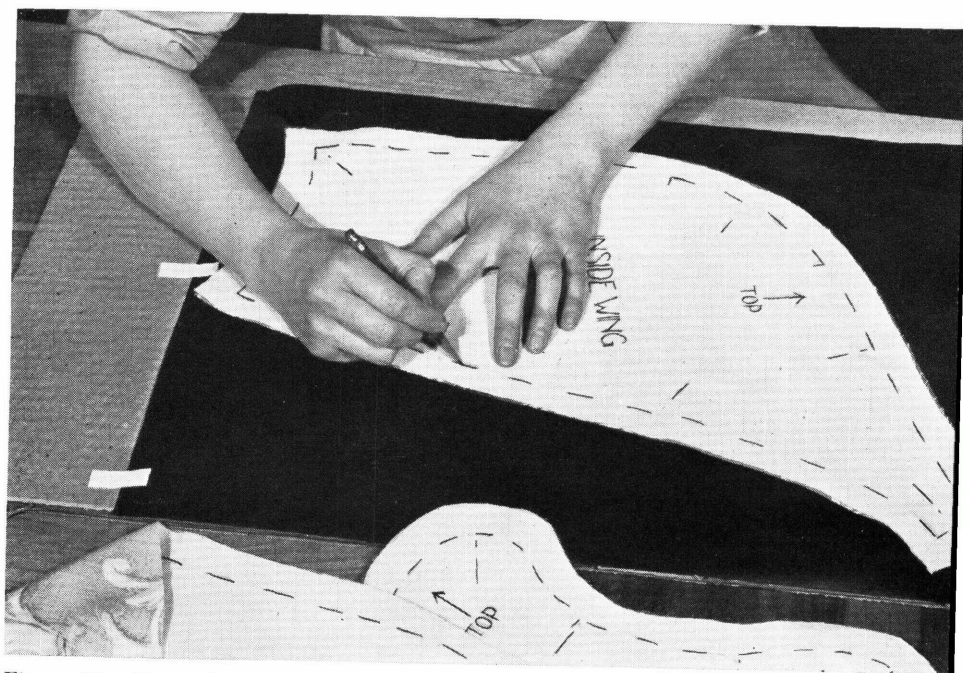
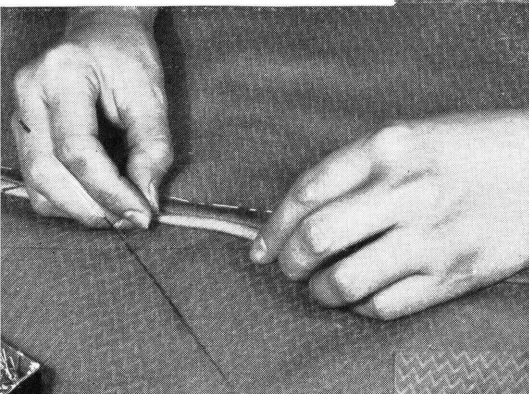
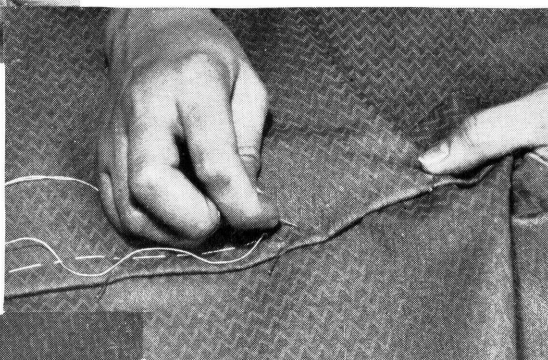


Figure 11.—To make an inexpensive tracing board, fasten a sheet of carbon paper, carbon side up, to a piece of cardboard with strips of adhesive tape or a little paste. Lay the parts of the slip cover, with the pattern still pinned in place on the carbon paper, and trace all markings.

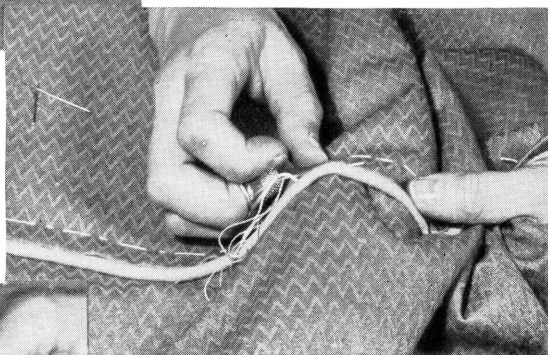


Figure 12.—Steps in making a corded seam.

↑ After pinning the right sides of the material together along the seam line, turn the material to the right side, fold the seam flat onto one piece, and pin it at right angles to the fold.



Insert cording and pin.



Baste one-half inch from the fold.

Then baste with a slip stitch on the fold.



Remove the first basting, turn to the wrong side, and stitch on the seam line, using a cording foot on the machine.

Corded and piped seams

To make a corded seam, first pin the two pieces together on the seam line, as for a plain seam. Turn the material to the right side and fold the seam flat onto one piece (fig. 12). Pin at right angles to the seam line and remove the first pins from the wrong side as you go. Insert the cording and repin. Baste from the right side by slipping the needle through the fold of the slip-cover material, take a short stitch through the cording and the other piece of the fabric. Continue until the entire seam is basted. Remove pins, turn to the wrong side, and, with a cording foot on the machine, stitch on the seam markings. Remove the bastings and finish the seams.

A piped seam is a variation of the corded seam. Instead of inserting a cloth-covered cord in the seam, a narrow bias fold is used. It is put in the same as the cording but may be stitched with the regulation foot because there is less bulk than in a corded seam.

French seams

French seams give an effect similar to the corded or welted finish. Since the finished seam is on the right side, the ridge outlines the construction lines (fig. 5) and relieves the plainness that results from plain seams. Also the two rows of stitching strengthen the seam.

French seams are best adapted to chairs that have straight lines. It is difficult to avoid puckers around curves because on curved seams the fabric has to be clipped almost to the stitching line, at several points, to make it lie flat. With French seams it is practically impossible to do this clipping without cutting the first row of stitching.

To make a French seam in a slip cover, place the right sides of the two pieces together; pin and baste on the seam line. Stitch about one-eighth to three-sixteenths of an inch outside the basting. Remove the basting and trim the seam to three-eighths of an inch. Press, turn to the right side, crease along the first stitching, and baste again. Make the second stitching on the right side so that it comes on the seam line marked from the pattern. Since this stitching is through four thicknesses of material, the seam will set better than when the first seam is trimmed narrow enough to make sure the raw edges are all covered by the second stitching. Also, there is less likelihood that the first stitching will pull out. Finish each seam before going to the next. In other words, do not join all pieces with the first stitching and then go back and complete the second sewing.

Remove the pattern and pin the pieces together according to the type of seams desired. Be sure to match all construction markings and place the pins close together on the seam line, parallel to the edge.

Pin fitting

Try the cover on the chair for a fitting. If the parts have been pinned together correctly, very few, if any, alterations will be necessary. However, this pin fitting may save much time and trouble, particularly if the pattern was made from a fabric different in texture and weight from that used for the slip cover.

If the cover does not fit well, go slowly in making changes. Remember

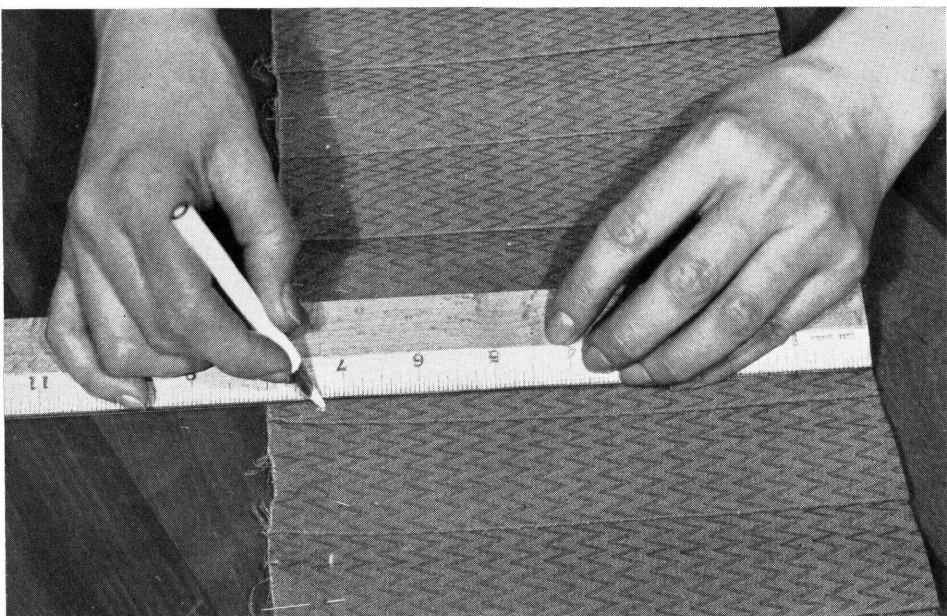


Figure 13.—Measure from the finished edge of the valance to get the desired depth. These marks also serve as the stitching line when the valance is being attached to the body of the slip cover.

that the pattern was carefully modeled on the chair in the first place. Before making any major alterations, see that the slip cover has been put on properly and that all seam lines come where they should. This pin fitting may take considerable time, but it is worth every minute spent because it often avoids mistakes and irreparable damage. If carefully done, it should eliminate all subsequent fittings.

After all seams have been checked and the necessary alterations made, turn up the lower edge so that it comes just to the lower edge of the upholstery. Pin a section of the valance pattern in place and see that its depth is in good relation to the slip cover and that the pleats are a pleasing width and distance apart. Sometimes it is desirable to change both the width and spacing of the pleats as well as the depth of the valance. When everything checks to your satisfaction, remove the cover and proceed with the permanent seaming.

Order of seaming

Remove the fitted cover and baste all seams about one-half inch from the stitching line to keep the parts in place should any of the pins fall out. Then finish every seam that will be crossed by another. In a slip cover for a wing chair first make the seams joining the inside wings to the inside arms; then join the inside back to the inside wing and armpieces. Next, sew the outside wingpieces to the outside back. Leave one of these seams open part way for the placket. So far, only plain seams, trimmed to one-half inch and overcast, have been used. Then make a continuous seam from

x (fig. 3), through j , b , and j' , to y , joining the inside wings and back to corresponding outside pieces. Since this is an important structural line, the seam should be corded.

Next sew the outside armpieces to the inside arm and outside wing sections. These seams need not be corded, but cording would give them more emphasis. Then put in the seat section, which was cut in one piece with the apron. Sew in the front armpieces last. Ease in the slight fullness around the curves at the top and bottom, and cord these seams because they are prominent and need emphasis.

When all these seams have been stitched, trimmed, overcast, and pressed, the main body of the slip cover is complete and is ready for the valance.

As with most easy chairs, the wing chair is farther from the floor in front than at the sides and back. In order that the valance may be the same distance from the floor at all places, measure the desired depth of the finished valance from the folded edge (fig. 13). For example, on the front piece, measure the length up 7 inches from the fold. This allows for the 2 inches turned up for hem. On the back piece, measure up 6 inches. At the end of the side valance, nearest the back mark up a distance of 6 inches and at the other end 7 inches. Connect these two points with a straight line to get the stitching line for joining the valance to the body of the slip cover.

Then join the valance to the body of the slip cover with a corded seam.

The cushion Cut the cover for the cushion from a pattern the same as the rest of the slip cover. Join the front and side boxings in plain seams and then pin them to the top and bottom pieces.

Put a slide fastener long enough to extend around the corners of the cushion in the center of the back boxing and then pin the boxing in place. Putting the long placket through the center provides for getting the cover on and off easily and at the same time makes the seam less bulky.

Making and attaching the valance Cut and match enough strips of material 10 inches wide (the greatest distance of the chair from the floor plus 1 inch for seams) to make 224 inches, the amount needed for plan E in figure 8. Since pleated valances set better if the pieces

are joined with a plain seam in the fold under the pleats, hem the strips before sewing them together. Turn up the lower edges 2 inches to allow for a $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch turn-under and finished hem $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide. Put the hems in by hand. Machine stitching is much quicker, but even when done with matching thread and medium-length stitches, it detracts from the finished appearance.

After hemming, steam-press the pieces to make the folds as flat as possible. Then mark the pleats according to E in figure 9. Lay the pleats in the front and side sections, joining the strips under a box pleat at the front corners. The piece across the lower edge of the back may be left plain. In fact, many persons prefer to extend the outer back piece to the floor and hem it rather than extend the pleated valance across the back. This plan, however, usually saves more time than material.

If a gathered valance is used, cut the pieces the same as for a pleated valance and then seam, hem, and gather.

Slip Covers for Other Upholstered Furniture

Making a slip cover for any other type of chair will be easy after mastering the one for a wing chair. A slip cover for a sofa or love seat is no more difficult than and very little different from the cover shown on the wing chair (fig. 1). However, there usually are more cushions to cover, but there are no wings; and since the lower edge is usually close to the floor, the valance is generally omitted.

For a studio couch with separate cushions there are three cushion covers to make. The cover for the studio couch itself is really the same as a cushion on an enlarged scale. As a rule, the boxing is sewed to the top with a plain, corded, or French seam. A gathered or pleated valance is attached to the lower edge of the boxing with the same kind of seam as is used on the rest of the cover and the cushions (fig. 14). This involves no problems not already described.

A chaise longue is in reality an upholstered chair with an extended seat. The steps in making a slip cover for this piece of furniture are exactly the same as those described for upholstered chairs (pp. 8 to 25).



Figure 14.—The top and side boxing of a slip cover for a studio couch are made exactly the same as the top and sides of a boxed cushion. The lower edge of the boxing is usually finished with a valance.